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### Marinate for Flavor and Tenderness

A marinade is a seasoned liquid used to flavor meat, poultry, fish, or vegetables before cooking. Marinades tenderize the tough, moisten the dry, and enliven the bland. While marinade may be cooked or uncooked, almost all marinades contain some type of acidic ingredient; such as wine, vinegar, citrus or other fruit juice, soy sauce, tomatoes, buttermilk or yogurt that act to tenderize the surface of meats, fish and poultry and to encourage the transfer of flavors.

Marinating can help tenderize less tender cuts of meat such as round steak, flank steak or London broil. They can be as simple as marinating chicken pieces in Italian dressing or making your own. There are recipes in most basic cook books. There are also marinades on the market you can buy, but you can make your own for just pennies.

Besides the acids listed above, there are two other basic ingredients in marinades. Oils provide moisture (use two parts acid to one part oil). Many marinades, especially those used on vegetables, lean fish, and poultry, often include some olive oil or melted butter. The third ingredient in marinades are seasonings to dress up flavors. Sugars are a common flavoring. Honey, molasses, and brown or granulated sugar take the sharp edge off a high-acid marinade, and meats basted with sweetened liquids develop a rich, brown crust. Garlic, herbs and spices are popular flavorings for marinades.

Allow about one fourth to one half cup marinade for each one to two pounds of meat, poultry, fish or vegetables. Always marinate in glass, porcelain, stainless steel or a food-quality heavy-duty plastic bag. Don't use cast iron or aluminum as the acid reacts with the metal and gives an unpleasant appearance and flavor. Don't use earthenware containers because they are more porous and fired at lower temperatures and the marinade may seep into the container.

The length of time a particular food is marinated depends on the strength of the marinade and the flavor and texture of the food. Fish should be marinated no more than 30 minutes, and then only in a delicately flavored marinade that won't overpower it. Vegetables can be marinated for an hour, chicken and chops up to one to two hours. Cubed meats marinate for just two to three hours; a whole five to ten pound piece and less tender cuts, for twelve to twenty-four hours. Cut large chunks into smaller ones, score the surface to allow the marinade to penetrate and season. The flavor of the marinade will penetrate about one fourth inch into the food.

Do not marinate more than twenty four hours because meat fibers will break down and the meat

surface will become mushy.

To prevent bacterial contamination, **DO NOT LEAVE AT ROOM TEMPERATURE MORE THAN 2 HOURS**. It is best to cover and marinate the food for the entire time in the refrigerator. If marinating meats to be grilled let them come to room temperature before grilling the meat.

Some marinades are also suitable as a finishing sauce. Never use the marinade in which raw meat, poultry, or fish has steeped for basting cooked food or as a sauce without first bringing it to a rolling boil and boiling it for one full minute to kill any harmful bacteria from the raw food. Marinades are usually best when prepared fresh.